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Military Weekly Review

27 October 1978

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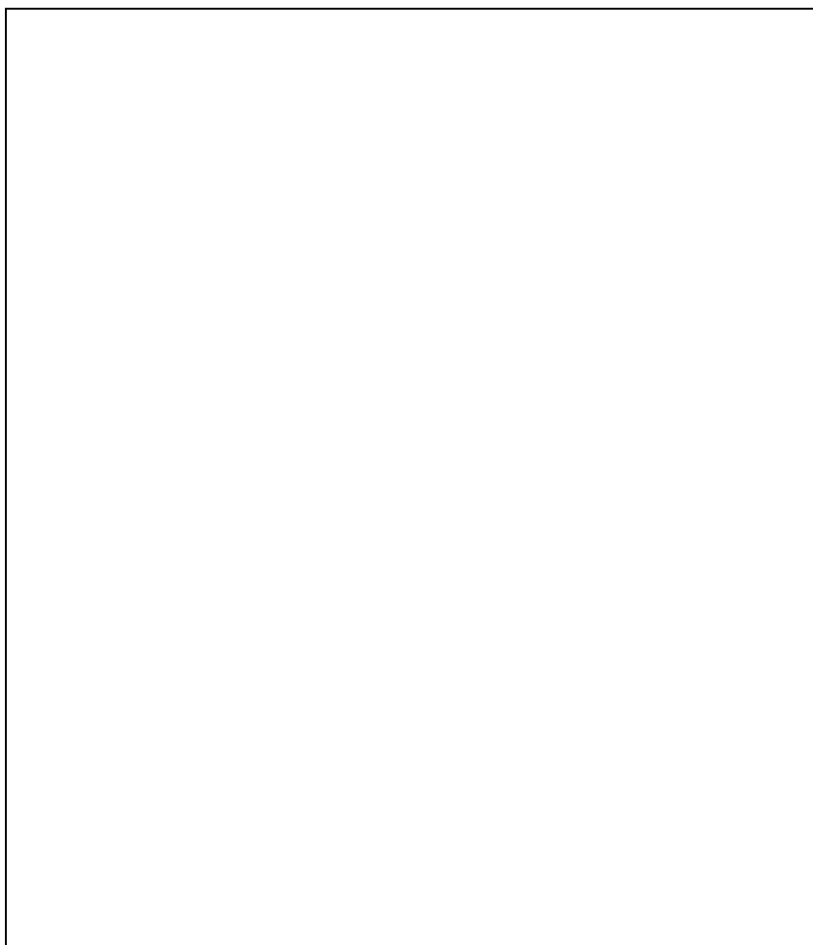
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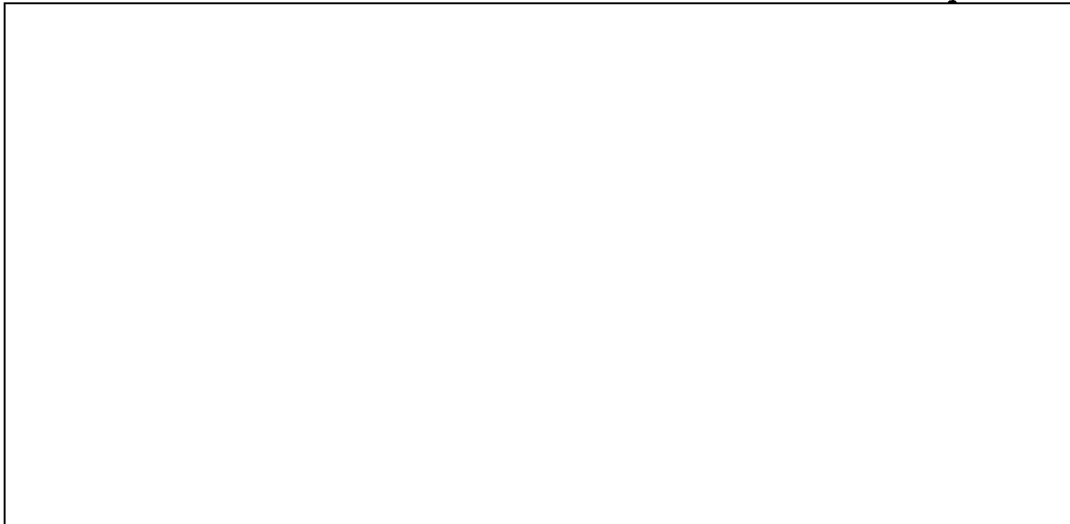
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The government has taken a calculated risk; inflexible implementation of the troop withdrawal timetable and a cessation of efforts to eliminate remaining rebel forces could provide insurgents an opportunity to rebuild forces. [redacted]



[redacted]
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INDONESIA: East Timor Security Force Disbanded

As a result of a series of successful military operations against Fretilin insurgents in Timor, the Indonesian Government on 17 October officially disbanded the East Timor Defense and Security Area (ETDSA) command and has initiated steps to make Timor a province of Indonesia. During the transition period, a combined military task force at Dili--the Timorese capital--will serve as an intermediate headquarters, supervising the withdrawal of most of the 30,000 troops in Timor and aiding the establishment of local civilian government.

Although the Indonesian forces and their Timorese allies suffered substantial casualties without making any dramatic gains against the Fretilin rebels, the cumulative effects of constant military pressure, the interdiction of supplies, government pacification efforts, and combat casualties have fragmented and demoralized the insurgents. [redacted] fewer than 1,000 hard-core rebels remain. Reduced to hiding in remote areas and using hit-and-run tactics, these survivors are more of an irritant than a security threat.

The Fretilin movement itself, which once commanded widespread loyalty among the inhabitants of the former Portuguese territory, is now split into several competing factions. Moderate rebel leaders still hope to secure a cease-fire under United Nations auspices and ultimately some form of autonomy, but their chances of success appear slim. Moreover, extremists have evidently taken control of the remaining armed rebels and have alienated many Fretilin military commanders as well as the general populace through terrorist tactics.

The Indonesian Government has taken a calculated risk in downgrading the status of the rebellion and greatly reducing military operations in Timor.

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It is also clear, but largely unmentioned in Indonesian commentary, that the reduced level of fighting in Timor has been due in the large part to a curtailment of the Army's operational sweeps as preparations advance for the troop withdrawal and the establishment of "normalization." The timetable calls for withdrawing 22 of 32 Army battalions from Timor by April 1979 and eventually delegating security duties to 28,000 local police and home guards.

Although the need for maintaining large numbers of combat troops in Timor has diminished, an inflexible implementation of the government timetable, coupled with a cessation of efforts to eliminate remaining rebel forces, could provide Fretilin the opportunity to rebuild during the coming rainy season. Djakarta views the situation as well in hand,

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